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ABSTRACT

This paper examines and explains the elements of the paranoid style in rhetoric (first noted by Richard Hofstader in 1966) employed by Leonard Jeffries, Chairman of the Black Studies Department at City College of New York, in his July 1991 speech at the Empire State Black Arts and Cultural Festival in Albany, New York. The paper also suggests that Jeffries' use of the style reveals an element of paranoid rhetoric not specifically noted by Hofstader, i.e., the posture adopted by the paranoid rhetor, and that this posture or relativity to the audience is that of revelation. As a background for the examination of Jeffries' discourse, the paper traces the historical tradition (from 1950 onward) of radical Black rhetoric. The paper concludes that the technique of the paranoid style can be understood through Jeffries' rhetoric and that it is Jeffries' credibility as an academician which permits him to present his discourse from the rhetorical posture of revelation. (Twenty-six references are attached.) (PRA)

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LEONARD JEFFRIES AND THE PARANOID STYLE

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I.

In the early hours of a June evening, a group of young White men went through the fence and into the front yard of the only Black family living in a working-class neighborhood in St. Paul, Minnesota. There, they planted a cross made of two legs of a broken chair, wrapped in terry cloth and doused with paint thinner, and set it on fire. The family, Russ and Laura Jones and their five children, had already been forced to endure having their tires slashed, a car window broken, and their children called racial epithets in front of their house. But the cross burning represented the strongest message yet, with a long and clear history as a racist threat to "get out or else" (Ingwerson, 1991).

Such accounts normally conjure up mental images of a foregone period, when the United States was faced with some of the most tumultuous racial disputes in her history. Recollections of violent protests and fighting in the late 1960s and early-1970s over racial equality typically come to mind. However, it is rather ironic that the preceding instance actually occurred in 1991, during an era when many individuals in society have expressed the sentiment that racism has been eliminated. As Eleanor Norton observed in 1990, "With persistence, even tenacity, race lingers in American life, seeming to mock us like a disquieting riddle. It is our longest running unresolved issue" (p. xvii).

Despite many advances which have eliminated numerous structural barriers impeding minorities from social progress,

the United States is once again engaged in a dispute over ethnicity. Racial leaders are now calling for a renewed spirit of ethnic nationalism and proposing voluntary segregation. Angered minority educators decry continued discrimination, and place blame on Anglo-Saxons, particularly the Jewish community. As if from the early part of the century, scholars debate a rejuvenated form of social Darwinism, in which they cite studies claiming one race to be biologically superior to another ("Jeffries Caught," 1991). In an age dedicated to diversity, it is ironic to find a society which continues to seek out racial distinctions, similar to what W.E.B. DuBois (1961) termed "the problem of the twentieth century...the problem of the color line."

Racial Trends in the 1990s

Several studies have argued that despite attempts to integrate Blacks into mainstream America, "present findings suggest that racial stratification and racial inequality have changed in nature rather than in significance—from a more overt to a more covert and subtle form of racial isolation and inequality" (G. E. Thomas, 1990, p. 265). David A. Thomas (1989) adds, "We are still living in the aftermath of a social earthquake—slavery and its sequelae's long-term effects on racial identity, Black self-esteem, and White prejudice—lie deep within our culture" (p. 282). Considering that by the year 2000, demographers have predicted that Blacks will comprise one out of every seven people in the United States (Bodovitz, 1991), the issues over race will undoubtedly remain a vital concern in the near future.

Forecasting that these issues of race will create dilemmas for a more diverse society, several scholars in the educational community have initiated substantial reforms in an attempt to confirm that students are socialized into a non-racist environment. By extolling the potency of a nation resolute on appreciating the diversity of individuals, numerous minority groups and administrators have revised characteristically traditional and "White-male-centered" curricula, and in turn, attached instruction advocating the postulates of "multi-culturalism." Representative subjects of multi-cultural studies include Black Studies, and recently, have been appended with courses examining feminist literature and analyzing the gay/lesbian experience. Furthermore, many of these proponents of educational diversity have endeavored to implement campus policies designed at limiting speech or expression that may inherently advocate cultural exclusion.

Antithetically, these actions have not been undertaken without intense criticism voiced by typically conservative educators. These scholars fervently maintain that traditional courses [American History, American and British Literature, and Philosophy] are *currently* inclusive for all segments of society, because they reflect perspectives and opinions which have cultivated the values of Western culture. Moreover, assailing "politically correct" actions which, they assert, violate freedom of speech, various instructors have sought to repeal such campus policies, congregating under the banner of academic freedom.

In 1988, when the embroiled subject of multi-cultural education was considered in the state of New York, leaders assembled a collection of educational consultants, minority professors, and various other advisors. The purpose of this panel was to examine the inclusivity of New York's public school curriculum, and thereby make recommendations as to what reform should be conducted. Dr. Leonard Jeffries, chairman of the Black Studies department at City College of New York, elected to serve on this board.

Jeffries, a Black, had earlier in 1988 been criticized for making "racial remarks," by allegedly telling a class of students that Whites were biologically inferior to Blacks, and apparently professing, "If I had my way, I'd wipe them off the face of the Earth" ("Jeffries Caught," 1991, p. 1). Furthermore, furor over the curriculum proposed by Jeffries prompted reproach by Assistant Secretary of Education Diane Ravitch and historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. Ultimately, controversy over Jeffries' views climaxed on July 20, 1991 at the Empire State Black Arts and Cultural Festival in Albany, New York. In approximately a two-hour speech, Jeffries cited numerous examples which "proved" the existence of "racial pathology" in the U.S.; Whites, particularly the effectual Jewish community, are said to have secretly plotted to undermine Black America. When the text of Jeffries' speech was made public, SUNY-New Paltz President Alice Chandler resigned from the advisory board of SUNY's African-American Institute because of the Institute's co-sponsorship of the speech. Chandler told the Middletown Times-Herald Record that she resigned because, "I wanted to make

plain my total repudiation of the base appeals to prejudice and anti-Semitism being advanced by Professor Jeffries" ("Jeffries Caught," 1991, p. 3).

Through the resulting verbal conflagration, Jeffries has become a familiar personality in the Black community, and the subject of much media discussion on a national scale. Therefore, an analysis of the rhetoric employed by Dr. Leonard Jeffries is essential to understanding the discourse of modern-day Black radicals.

Jeffries rhetoric is a worthy subject of analysis because of his appropriation of what Richard Hofstadter (1966) has called the "paranoid style." Such a style is usually associated with the discourse of dominant conservative/reactionary groups within a society. The possibility that minority rhetors may employ such a style has received surprisingly little attention. How such rhetors adapt the style to their particular situations can tell us much about how the style has evolved since Hofstadter first examined it.

II.

In this paper, I will seek to explicate the elements of the paranoid style employed by Jeffries in his July 1991 speech at the Black Arts and Cultural Festival in Albany, N. Y. I will also suggest that his use of the style reveals an element of paranoid rhetoric not specifically noted by Hofstadter—i.e., the *posture* adopted by the paranoid rhetor. This posture or relationship to the audience is that of revelation. Before examining Jeffries' discourse, I will attempt to place Jeffries within the tradition of radical Black rhetoric.

The Black Struggle for Equality: 1950-1975

One of the most prominent events that occurred during approximately the twenty-five years following World War II was a renewed spirit for Blacks to achieve social integration. This saw an increase in both nonviolent and violent civil disobedience.

Non-violent means of protesting racial discrimination were typically administered through major boycotts, and other peaceful forms of dissent. For example, the successful boycott of segregated buses in Montgomery, Alabama brought Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., into national prominence. Raised in an intensely religious family with a record of fighting for Black rights, King came naturally to his essentially religious view that non-violent protest is the legitimate means by which concessions for the oppressed may be attained (Lewis, 1970).

In 1960 Black students began the sit-in movement at a Whites-only lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, touching off a long series of similar actions by thousands of Black southerners and their White allies throughout the South. The Freedom Rides on buses came in 1961; Blacks and Whites were testing federal court orders desegregating public transportation and demonstrating the lack of compliance throughout the South. In addition, there were mass marches, prayer vigils, and arrests in Albany, Georgia in 1962. In the spring of 1963, King and his associates launched a series of demonstrations against discrimination in Birmingham. Fire hoses and police dogs were used against the demonstrators, many of whom were young children; this action gained national publicity. An agreement desegregat-

ing businesses and employment ended the protests, but another round of more aggressive demonstrations was touched off when a Black home and motel were bombed. This was followed by the massive 1963 March on Washington, in which King dramatized rising Black aspirations in his famous "I Have a Dream" speech (Bennett, 1966).

In contrast to non-violent protest, direct action against segregation in the North began in earnest in the 1960s. Reflecting the sentiment earlier expressed by W.E.B. DuBois, to the many Black leaders, the hypothesis of non-violent "go slow" protest was ineffective in meeting the needs of the Black community. Integration, racial harmony, and coalition politics—primary goals of organizations like the NAACP and Southern Christian Leadership Conference— were challenged as accommodationist and inadequate. The urban ghetto soon served as a stage for demonstrations of violence and fear. Due to family disorganization, substandard housing, unemployment, and inferior schools common to Blacks in the inner-city, the Nation of Islam ("Black Muslims") began aggressively pressing for Black pride and economic equality. The Congress of Racial Equality [CORE] accelerated protest campaigns against housing and unemployment discrimination. Under the leadership of Stokely Carmichael, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee [SNCC] germinated the "Black Power" movement, a revitalized call for Black nationalism. In this period, pride and consciousness grew in all segments of the Black community in the North, particularly among the youth (Feagan & Hahn, 1973).

On August 11, 1965, less than a week after President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law, the Los Angeles community of Watts exploded with the worst racial disturbance since the Detroit riot of 1943. In more than six days of looting, fires, and violence, approximately four thousand people were arrested, thirty-four people [mostly Black civilians] were killed, and an estimated $35 million in damage was done (U.S. National Advisory Commission [UNAC], 1968, p. 38). The deep alienation, bitterness, and potential for violence seen in Watts would appear again and again across the country. More than 170 cities experienced racial disturbances between 1961 and 1968 (Spilerman, 1976). The sense of national emergency became especially acute during the "long, hot summer" of 1967. In the first nine months of that year, there were over a hundred civil disorders, forty-one of them serious disorders involving fires, looting, violence, and the need for significant quantities of police, National Guardsmen, and even army troops to quell the uprisings (UNAC, 1968). In April 1968, following the assassination of King, more than a hundred cities experienced violent outbreaks, adding further to the toll of lives lost and the damage to homes and other property.

These events both heralded and spurred a change in the tenor of the campaign for Black rights. Most Blacks viewed the riots as spontaneous outbursts brought on by years of discrimination and mistreatment (Campbell & Schuman, 1968, chap. 5). They also thought the riots helped the racial situation by focusing attention on the longstanding economic and social grievances of urban Blacks (Sears & McConahay, 1973). Some

analysts have concluded that, in fact, a "riot ideology" had emerged and was attractive to many Blacks. For example, Nathan S. Caplan (1970), after an extensive review of the literature on Blacks' riot-related attitudes, concluded, "Militancy in the pursuit of civil rights objectives represents a considerable force within the ghetto. Its support approaches normative proportions and is by no means limited to a deviant and irresponsible minority" (p. 71).

Common Techniques of Revolutionary Black Rhetors

The extent of the Black uprisings in the 1960s and 1970s holds some interesting associations with the oratorical strategies utilized by leaders of the movement. Arthur L. Smith (1969) maintains that although the discourse of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Black Power leaders appeared to conflict, it was King's audience who was especially susceptible to the rhetoric of the Black revolutionists. This was primarily because King had taught his audience the benefits of self-dignity and unity, two factors later highlighted by the revolutionists as necessary for political leverage (pp. 13-14).

Robert L. Scott (1968) proposes that the discourse of radical Black leaders must be understood before a constructive solution to the problem of racism may be reached. Moreover, Smith (1969) argues that while the rhetoric of the Black revolution is often viewed as a terrifying summons to violence, it is not much unlike the revolutionary rhetoric employed by White Americans. Psychiatrist James P. Comer (cited in Scott, 1969) explains how this technique accomplishes two vital purposes:

> The concept of Black Power is an inflammatory one. It was introduced in an atmosphere of militancy . . . and in many quarters it has been equated with violence and riots. As a result the term distresses White friends of the Negro, frightens and angers others. . . . The fact is that a form of Black Power may be absolutely essential. The experience of Negro Americans, supported by numerous historical and psychological studies, suggests that the most alienated Negroes cannot be met—and that there can therefore be no end to racial unrest—except through the influence of a unified, organized Negro community with genuine political and economic power (p. 10).

Because of the significant need for bonding for many in the Black community, the rhetor is placed in the position of creating appeals which encourage the audience to fuse into one powerful crusade set on vanquishing the hegemony of the oppressor. Smith (1969) identifies four rhetorical strategies employed by radical black rhetors to accomplish this purpose: vilification, objectification, legitimation, and mythication.

Vilification is defined as the rhetor's use of caustic and embittered language, typically directed against a well-known individual of the opposition. Smith (1969) explains:

> The rhetoric of black revolution mainly utilizes political persons for vilification. Those who have been elected or appointed to serve in a public position are vulnerable to their attack because of their visibility. . . . The agitator believes that he is more likely to bring about a dramatic situational change if he meets with opposition

> because the masses will join his cause. Sometimes the creation of the opposition becomes a task of the agitator when negative reaction is lacking toward his position (p. 28).

By using a well-known individual of the opposition, the speaker illustrates the powerful machinery working against him/her; thus an opportunity for catharsis is provided for the audience. This technique has been emulated by other groups seeking social equality [i.e. women and homosexuals] (Yetman & Steele, 1972, p. 528).

The goal of objectification is attempted for the purpose of "showing that a certain race, party, or secret collection of men is responsible for all the misfortune that befalls the agitator's votarists" (Smith, 1969, p. 29). While vilification seeks to single out an individual in the group, the stratagem of objectification is to place blame on a collection of individuals. For example, the Black Panther Party provided its members with a basic assumption to serve as a foundation for their beliefs:

> We start with the basic definition: that Black people in America are a colonized people in every sense of the term and that White America is an organized Imperialist force holding back people in colonial bondage (Cleaver cited in Skolnick, 1969 p. 112).

This sample represents two vital strategies of revolutionary black rhetors. First, by establishing White Americans as an organized force arrayed against Blacks, the orator attempts to shift absolute accountability of Blacks' social problems onto

the Whites. Secondly, it is done in a technique that identifies the third characteristic of revolutionary black rhetoric: mythication.

By "employing language that suggests the sanction of supra-rational forces, the agitator creates a spiritual dynamism for his movement" (Smith, 1969, 34). The technique of mythication creates a type of "religious symbolism" (p. 34) used for justifying a cause. For instance, by depicting the civil rights struggle as parallel to Bible's narration of Israel's captivity in Egypt, the rhetor may take on the persona of a Black Moses, dedicated to leading the masses out of the clutches of White oppression.

Finally, in an attempt to exculpate the actions which may be criticized by society, the revolutionary rhetor may employ the strategy of legitimation. Attributing many of the Black's social and psychological ills to his "self-hatred" and resultant "self-destructive impulses," Black psychiatrist Alvin F. Poussaint (1967) has recognized that militant groups, including the Black Muslims and Black Power advocates use this strategy to "legitimize" their deeds. For example:

> We must undo the centuries-old brainwashing by the White man that has made us hate ourselves. We must stop being ashamed of being Black and stop wanting to be White! (Poussaint, 1967, p. 349).

Similarly, Smith notes that the reason justified for the Watts and Detroit riots was that Black revolutionists "were tired of oppression and discrimination" (p. 41).

While Smith asserts that these rhetorical strategies always occur at some point in the revolutionary campaign (p. 42), elements of each strategy can also be identified in the discourse of non-revolutionary rhetors. However, Smith makes a distinction in the two, in that the revolutionary rhetor "lacks the traditional rhetorical tools, such as invention, arrangement, style, and delivery, but that he utilizes specialized designs within these conventional canons" (pp. 25-26). I will attempt to argue that although Dr. Leonard Jeffries' rhetoric employs strategies consistent with all the strategies of traditional black revolutionary discourse, he may be distinguished from most radical blacks in that he employs different stylistic approaches—i.e., the "paranoid style."

III.

Richard Hofstadter uses the obviously pejorative term "paranoid style" to classify certain rhetorical strategies "simply because no other word adequately evokes the qualities of heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy" (p. 3). Hofstadter argues that he does not use the expression "paranoid style" in the clinical sense, as "a chronic mental disorder characterized by systematic delusion of persecution and of one's own greatness;" rather, it is the use of paranoid characteristics, utilized "by more or less normal people that makes the phenomenon significant" (p. 4). Moreover, while the clinical paranoid and the rhetor using the paranoid style both communicate with language which is "overheated, oversuspicious, overaggressive, grandiose, and apocalyptic in expression," the clinical paranoid tends to see the world as antagonistically

conspiring *against him*, whereas "the spokesman of the paranoid style finds it directed against a nation, a culture, a way of life whose fate affects not himself alone but millions of others" (Hofstadter, 1966, p. 4).

Despite the fact that the paranoid style is typically attributed to rhetoric delivered by the extreme right wing, Hofstadter has identified this technique as consistent with "both sides of the race controversy today, among White Citizens Councils and Black Muslims" (p. 9). Considering the re-emergence of Black nationalism throughout segments of society, coupled with the polemical introduction of "political correctness" in mainstream American education, an analysis of professor Leonard Jeffries' fiery speech at the Empire State Black Arts and Cultural Festival is not only a modern example of radical Black discourse, but one which appropriately highlights the rhetorical strategy identified as the paranoid style.

The rhetor utilizing the paranoid style typically portrays the world as "a gigantic and yet subtle machinery of influence set in motion to undermine and destroy a way of life" (Hofstadter, 1966, p. 29). In other words, instead of an overt attempt to overthrow a group of people, the conspirators endeavor to overcome their enemies through clandestine efforts. Consider the following excerpt from Jeffries, about the inclusion of race in educational curriculum:

> . . . I had to say to myself after reading it ten times, unbelieving what I was reading, that this was not an accident. This was by design, by people who knew what they were doing: stripping Africa of its significance in its

> place in the world. And the people who are doing it are very nice, friendly White folks and some of their achieving Negro partners. That's the tragedy. These are not Ku Klux Klan people. These are some very nice White folks—your neighbors, your colleagues, the people that you work with. They go to church and the synagogue, think highly of themselves; but they didn't hesitate at all to distort history in what I call racial pathology (Jeffries, cited in "Text of Jeffries'," 1991, pp. 2-3)

Concerning the structural makeup of the United States, Jeffries proclaims:

> . . . the educational arena was designed to support the system of White supremacy that was institutionalized in this nation. That's what education was for. The legal system was designed to support the system of White supremacy in this nation. The economic system was the heart of this system of White supremacy in this nation. And the cultural system went along with that—movies, all the rest of it ("Text," p. 4).

As will be discussed later, such a rhetorical posture of "revelation" was important in the rhetoric of Jeffries. By portraying the United States as a nation which attempts to covertly facilitate White supremacy throughout all of society, Jeffries attempts to define the rules of the game in his own terms; any opinions to the contrary could be designated as inherently racist.

A second quality of rhetoric employing the paranoid style is that the shrewd antagonist [whose endeavors are veiled from

the consciousness of society] represents the manifestation of evil incarnate. Hofstadter explains:

> This enemy is clearly delineated: he is a perfect model of malice, a kind of amoral superman: sinister, ubiquitous, powerful, cruel, sensual, luxury-loving. Unlike the rest of us, the enemy is not caught in the toils of the vast mechanism of history, himself a victim of his past, his desires, his limitations. He is a free, active, demonic agent (p. 32).

Hofstadter adds that often these base individuals are those beings who possess some immense source of power; for example, they may exhibit broad influence on the educational system (p. 32).

In the speech given in Albany, Jeffries meets this criteria with a description of educational consultant Diane Ravitch:

> So we have to see that there is a war against the African. Now, I knew it before, but I didn't know how devilish it was gonna get or could be. They're nice White people. You don't feel so bad if you got to go up against someone who is really down-and-out devilish and doggish. But if you get the smiling people like Diane Ravitch—"I'm trying to do the right thing"—deedeedee—"and I've done the right thing all these years." Read Diane Ravitch's record; look at her track record. This is the ultimate, supreme, sophisticated, debonair racist—pure and simple ("Text," p. 4).

When speaking of the influential movie industry, Jeffries attests:

> Russian Jewry had a particular control over the movies, and their financial partners, the Mafia, put together a system of destruction of Black people. Talk about image and self-esteem? This was an important part of development of any youth. We went to the movies every Saturday and saw the Native Americans being wiped out and Africans being denigrated: Sambo images, Beaulah, Stepin Fetchit. That's what they put up there. It was by design. It was calculated ("Text," p. 4).

Not only does Jeffries portray the opposition as "slick and devilish" for attempting to repress minorities in society, he also infers that these diabolic individuals will assassinate anyone who opposes their tyrannical endeavors. By alluding to familiar Black civil rights leaders who had been killed by past adversaries, Jeffries narrates:

> . . . the people around me say "Len, they're targeting you for death." I said "That's cool. That means I must be doing something right." I live to forty-five, forty-four years on this planet, and if I hadn't done what I should do by then, then, you know, there's not much more I'm going to do. Malcolm only had thirty-nine. Martin only had thirty-nine. So death is not a thing. I'm not gonna back down, no matter what. They just—they picked on the right person at the right time, and they're not going to win this one ("Text," p. 6).

One last analysis is necessary to prove the existence of the paranoid style in a work of rhetoric. The standard approach to presenting discourse in the paranoid style is to start with

assumptions that can be defended, and then "marshal these facts toward an overwhelming 'proof' of the conspiracy that is to be established" (Hofstadter, 1966, p. 36). Simply explained, the rhetor attempts to first persuade the audience through the use of reason and evidence, and then makes a "curious leap in imagination" to "prove" the validity of a normally skeptical contention. For example, Jeffries concedes above that Blacks do not want to believe that Whites are inherently racist, but the uncovering of surreptitious evidence *proves* that such is the case.

Examination of Jeffries' speech produces additional illustrations into the leap made from the factual to the imaginative. After explaining some of the research he has conducted, and his discovering that the original Statue of Liberty was Black ("Text," pp. 12-13), Jeffries then deducts:

> The question of Black folks getting into their history, starting to fight for liberty and struggling for what is right is not the question of disuniting America. It has been our struggle that has kept America united. . . . America was founded by rich White men with property and power. It was founded on an affirmative-action program for rich White men with property and power. . . . And when independence was established, the independence was established, and the Constitution put in place in 1787 is [sic] a document of affirmative action for rich White folks with property and power ("Text," pp. 13-14).

In another location, concerning the controversial theological work The Black Presence in the Bible, by Walter McCray, Jeffries asserts:

> The people of the Bible were not European. They were African or people of mixed African blood. And you have to begin to deal with that. In our lessons we will put the ten major historical figures in the Bible and all of their 10 African wives. Each of them had an African wife. Now it's ironic that in Jewish tradition, in the orthodoxy that if you are an orthodox Jew, you cannot be a true Jew unless you pass through the woman's line. But isn't it ironic that in the Biblical text most of the great historic Jewish figures had African wives? So we've got to know that. And we know what the implications are. And know it critically. So we're talking about recapturing the truth of the people. And it's not a question of a negative self-esteem. Isn't it ironic that Miss Daisy [Diane Ravitch] and her people are running around talking about that "this is just self-esteem and feel-good curriculum?" What the hell do they have in place for White people now? . . . What the hell do you think the existing curriculum is? ("Text," 17).

From this example, it is apparent that Jeffries has bounded from "factual" evidence of a historical and geographic analysis of the Bible, to implied supposition that White Americans have willfully perverted history and religion in an attempt to conceal their inferiority.

As can be seen, Jeffries clearly employs elements of the paranoid style. But what is noteworthy about his use of this

style is the type of posture he is able to assume with regard to his audience. Gronbeck (1972) defines this notion of posture as "[a rhetor] assuming a stance in relationship to his audience and by accumulating material consistent with that posture" (p. 419). The type of relationship Jeffries seeks to establish here is that of "revelation." In his discussion on Ronald Reagan's speeches on Nicaragua, Bass (1988) notes a similar type of posture employed by Reagan. He defines this in the following manner:

> The audience is presumed to be ignorant or deceived by an apparently harmless situation or state of affairs. The rhetor, consequently, takes it upon himself/herself to reveal to the audience the dangers inherent in the situation. Possessed of superior knowledge, insight, and/or information unavailable to anyone else, the rhetor perceives his/her duty to be that of alerting the unsuspecting masses to the fate that awaits them.

For Jeffries, such a posture succeeds with certain audiences because of his initial credibility as an academician. He is not perceived to be a member of the "lunatic fringe;" instead, his academic background lends an air of "authoritativeness" to his pronouncements.

IV

I have attempted to show how the discourse of Dr. Leonard Jeffries meets characteristics outlined by Richard Hofstadter as consistent with the "paranoid style." This technique has established some basis in the history of revolutionary rhetoric, although Jeffries' discourse tends be delivered to a vastly

different audience, in a different time period. Jeffries' rhetorical style appears to be appropriate for his audience; many Blacks currently remain convinced that a White supremacist conspiracy is currently waged against the Black—evidence to illustrate such an attitude is reflected in relatively current surveys.

In 1990, 29% of Black New Yorkers interviewed in a New York Times/CBS New Poll felt, to some degree, that the AIDS virus might have been "deliberately created in a laboratory in order to infect Black people." Moreover, 60% of Blacks suspected that the government might "deliberately" be making sure that drugs are easily available in poor Black neighborhoods (Page, 1991). Clarence Page (1991) attempts to offer explanation why these beliefs of conspiracy will inevitably continue: (1) sometimes they turn out to be true; (2) circumstantial evidence abounds; (3) it is impossible to prove a "negative"; and (4) "conspiracy theories make good rhetorical devices."

Through the rhetoric of Leonard Jeffries, one may understand the technique of discourse known as the paranoid style. In addition, it has been suggested that Jeffries' credibility as an academician permits him to present his discourse from the rhetorical posture of revelation. Because of the utilization of the paranoid style at all boundaries of the political spectrum, one may become more adept at recognizing this strategy, particularly in the dispute over racial equality, and may employ its characteristics in an attempt to persuade an audience to a select a desired course of action.

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